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Grotens, H.S.; van Dijk, Gerda; van Vugt, M.

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Leadership Practices of Council Secretaries in Turbulent Times; A Case Study

René Grotens
Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

Gerda van Dijk
Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

Mark van Vugt
Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

There is an increased interest among scientists and practitioners in leadership in complex and adaptive systems (adaptive leadership). Here we present qualitative research into the leadership styles and functions of a small sample of council secretaries in the Netherlands. The results from in-depth interviews show that in practice the formal and bureaucratic leadership functions are still dominant, leaving little room for adaptive and enabling leadership. This paper explores the extent to which the public and political circumstances influence the execution of these leadership functions. The main conclusion of our research is that leadership theory and practice diverge greatly.

INTRODUCTION

Society is greatly susceptible to change; we live in turbulent times and experience high degrees of complexity (Teisman & Klijn, 2008, Van Loon & Van Dijk, 2015). Economic, geopolitical, ecological, demographic and social developments, along with information technology, play an important part in this (Scharmer & Kaufman, 2013; Sowcik, Andenoro, McNutt, & Murphy, 2015).

At the same time, there is an extremely transparent and interlaced network society in which the social structure is more chaotic and ambivalent (Castells, 2004). The sociologist Bauman (2012) characterized this society as “a liquid society”.

These developments have consequences for the way in which public leadership is given form, or should be given form: “traditional hierarchical, role-based views of leadership are too simple for a world where nonprofits face unprecedented economic, demographic, technological, and social shifts” (Pappas, 2012, p. 253; Gowdy, Hildebrand, La Piana, & Campos, 2009).

Nowadays leadership is regarded as a contextual, interactive process that is played out on many levels within and outside organizations (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Bolden, Hawkins, Gosling, & Taylor, 2011;

Bligh, 2011; Bolden, 2011; Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013; Van Wart, 2013; Comfort & Resodihardjo, 2013). This means that in addition to the traditional hierarchical, bureaucratic leadership functions, adaptive and informal leadership functions are demanded (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014), in order that organizations are in a position to move with the changing needs of their environment (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017).

This article explores the extent to which public managers display adaptive leadership in practice. It considers and builds on research into leadership practices in a specific group of public managers - Dutch council secretaries (Grotens, 2015).

The work of the Dutch council secretary is a pivotal function; they are situated at the junction of political management, official organization and society (Van Dorp, 2016). The Dutch council secretary is the most important advisor of the executive Board of Mayor and councilors. In contrast to other members of the board, the council secretary does not have a vote. The council secretary is subject to the authority of the elected political officials: they appoint and dismiss the council secretary. In almost all cases the council secretary is also the general director of the official organization and official final responsibility. The tasks of the council secretary are chiefly and primarily focused internally ('t Hart, Braham, & Van Dorp, 2016). The achievement of pre-determined results with the resources available is an example of this. The question is whether and to what extent the council secretary displays adaptive leadership and moves in external and informal networks. Do they dare to improvise in their organizations, to create conditions and take risks to promote innovations (Baez & Abolafia, 2002; Nooteboom & Termeer, 2013)? How does the council secretary give shape to his role as public manager in the complex situation that comes with the demands of political management, official organization and society, and what influences him?

COMPLEXITY & LEADERSHIP

The problems with which leaders are confronted are becoming more complex (Sowcik et al., 2015; Van Loon & Van Dijk, 2015). Characteristic of what are known as wicked problems is that they are unique, unknown issues that due to their interconnectedness and ambiguity are almost insoluble, in that (1) the solution cannot be found retrospectively, (2) there is no right or wrong decision, at most better or poorer alternatives, and (3) there is high degree of uncertainty (Grint, 2005; Weber & Khademian, 2008; Mack, 2015; Fairhurst, 2016).

There is also rich connectivity – a multiplicity of interactions that influence each other and are dependent on time, place, and context (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). This is in contrast to what are called complicated or tame problems, in which there is no mutual influence caused by interactions (Grint, 2005). Put another way, complex problems are more than the sum of their parts and lead to a larger, new and unpredictable whole (Van Dijk, 2016). Thus, with complex problems the interactive relations, emergent factors, the unpredictability and the dynamic character play an important role.

In order to tackle complex problems, concepts of leadership that focus solely on the person of the leader, are no longer adequate (including Pearce & Conger, 2003; Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Hamel, 2009). Other concepts of leadership have come into being that are based on the assumption that the leader cannot know everything and that his or her actions are dependent on the situation, the complexity of specific problems, and diverse partners or parties (Grint, 2005; Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson, & Uhl-Bien, 2011; Warrick, 2011; Crosby, 't Hart, & Torfing, 2017). Innovation and creativity are necessary, or as Avolio et al. describe it: "Leadership is no longer simply described as an individual characteristic of difference, but rather is depicted in various models as dyadic, shared, relational, strategic, global, and a complex social dynamic." (2009, p. 422).

The Complexity Leadership Theory (henceforth, CLT) (Wheatley, 1992; Stacey, 2001; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, 2011) takes complexity as the starting point: it studies and analyzes internal and external networks in their contexts, in which independent individuals ('agents') from various organizations together reach creative and innovative ideas. In the CLT these networks are seen as systems, known as Complex Adaptive Systems (henceforth, CAS) (Rhodes, 2008).

The idea behind this is that by the collaboration of agents within the CAS, complex and dynamic problems, the wicked problems, are treated adaptively. Within the complex, dynamic systems (including networks) leadership emerges through the interactions of individuals (or groups). Thus the focus lies on the interactions within the CAS and the recognizable patterns of organization and leadership activities in them. The CLT does not link leadership only with inherent formal and hierarchical management structures, but puts the focus on the interaction between these formal and bureaucratic structures and the informal (adaptive) interactions of individuals and/or groups. In other words, the formal and bureaucratic management structures, in which control and authority are important elements, certainly have their place, but in CLT are not so central. CLT is about leadership *in* and *of* the CAS (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

For the adaptivity of organizations it is crucial that the creative and innovative ideas that emerge among the internal and external networks (CAS) are embedded in the existing administrative and bureaucratic organizational processes. The interweaving between the bureaucratic formal structure on the one hand, and the adaptive, dynamic structures (CAS) on the other, thus is of crucial importance to deal with the complexity. Leadership is not focused only on the results to be achieved, but equally on the adaptivity of the organization (Pawar & Eastman, 1997; Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013, p. 2).

The CLT distinguishes three leadership functions (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, 2011; Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013).

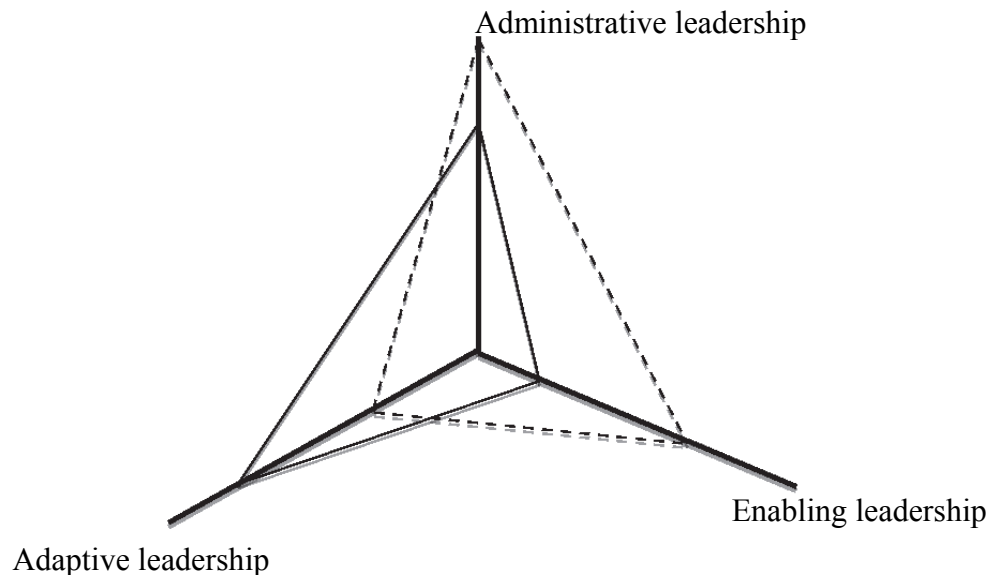
I. *Administrative leadership*, this leadership function encompasses the activities that maintain the bureaucratic structures and legal frameworks of the organization. These activities are apparent in the exercise of the formal and hierarchical management role and include, among other things, the structuring of tasks, planning, building on views and the allotment of resources, all in order to achieve the aims of the organization. Administrative leaders are aware of their formal position and the authority linked to it can be used to enforce top-down decisions. Administrative leaders focus their result directed activities on control and efficiency. This leadership function is regarded as a formal function.

II. *Adaptive leadership*, this leadership function aims at increasing the adaptivity of the organization. It generates new ideas, innovations, adaptive capabilities and changes, and manifests itself in the informal networks (CAS) (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 633; 2011). Adaptive leadership, with the minimum of formal structures, is capable of expediting the realization of initiatives despite the possible conflicts that can arise within the CAS. Making new links between people, domains, organizational levels, and businesses is then also a characteristic of adaptive leadership. Other activities of adaptive leadership are reflecting on actions (stimulating the learning process) and giving meaning to processes of innovation by clarifying the importance and implications. The adaptive leader dares to improvise and take risks (Heifetz, 1994; Teisman & Klijn, 2008).

III. *Enabling leadership*, this third leadership function of the CLT forms the link between administrative and adaptive leadership. It encompasses activities that are focused on the embedding of the ideas generated in the CAS in the processes and routines of the organization. This embedding can be accompanied by tensions because the aim of the bureaucratic and administrative function of the organization is not necessarily compatible with its adaptive and innovative function. Enabling leaders recognize both organizational needs – “perform and adapt” (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2013, p. 2). They break through the bureaucratic barriers and stimulate innovation and creative thought; they understand that in the complex situations of the organization continuous adaptivity and change are necessary. Activities of enabling leadership include among other things, helping adaptive leaders to bring their ideas to the attention of the right people and increasing the visibility of new ideas and innovations within and without the organization.

The three CLT leadership functions (administrative, adaptive, and enabling leadership) are to greater or lesser degrees interlaced (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009).

FIGURE 1
GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF INTERLACING OF CLT LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS



In figure 1 the interweaving between the various CLT leadership functions is represented graphically. In organizations in which adaptive leadership has a relatively presence (the black triangle in figure 1), the function of enabling leadership is less necessary, or even unnecessary: after all, enabling leadership helps to increase the adaptivity of organizations in which adaptive leadership is less strongly developed. In organizations in which the administrative leadership is a dominant presence (broken line in figure 1), more enabling leadership is needed as the adaptive leadership comes into its own right less - or even not at all.

Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009) state further that in adaptive organizations a suffocating preference for control can develop if there is no intertwining with the administrative functions of leadership. Then the political behavior of administrative leaders becomes apparent, and by which adaptive leadership is obstructed. In other words, it is assumed that when the interweaving of the bureaucratic, administrative leadership function (administrative leadership) with the adaptive – and informal – leadership function (adaptive leadership), including enabling leadership, is not optimal, this influences negatively the adaptivity of the organization.

The developments and changes in society lead to different demands as to how the role of public manager should be seen. The ideas of 'Public Value Management' state that the public manager should play an active part in the creation of networks in which the deliberations and dialogues with stakeholders (politicians, society, media, etc.) take place (Moore, 1995; Horner, Lehki & Blaug, 2006; Benington & Moore, 2011; Bryson et al., 2014). The aim of this is to create additional social value that can depend on sufficient legitimacy and confidence from politicians and society - Public Value. The conceptual framework of 'Public Value Management' corresponds to the CLT leadership functions adaptive and enabling leadership, operating in informal, complex and dynamic systems (including in networks) without setting up large bureaucratic structures. (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Nooteboom & Termeer, 2013). Both the CLT and Public Value Management emphasize that public managers should display adaptive and enabling leadership in order to operate effectively in complex, dynamic situations ('t Hart, 2014). The CLT helps this by conceptualizing and analyzing public leadership (Ospina, 2017, p. 281).

To what extent do public managers bring these leadership activities into practice? In other words, to what extent is the interlacing of the formal (administrative leadership) and the more informal leadership (adaptive leadership and enabling leadership) observable? The answer to this question provides insight

into the degree of adaptivity of government organizations and the role of public managers in the creation of added social value.

These questions will be elaborated in the following sections making use of the three leadership functions of the CLT. From the results and on the basis of three factors there is a further analysis of the extent to which the relation between the various leadership functions can be explained. Then three forces that play a role in the visibility of these leadership functions are further examined.

METHOD

Qualitative and interpretive research into Dutch council secretaries (Grotens, 2015) fits into the social constructivist epistemology in which conducting dialogues between the researcher and the research subject renders new insights (Gergen, 2014, Van Loon & Van Dijk, 2015). Language is used as the vector for attributing meaning (Gergen 2009; Weick 1979, 1995). In this sort of research, the knowledge acquired and/or theory frequently refer to examples in practice because assumptions and case studies form the basic material of the generative research, which is essentially different from more analytical epistemology (including, Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002; Cassel & Symon, 2004; Yin, 2009; Gergen, 2014). In this research the focus lies on the perspective of the research subjects: they tell their stories and new insights emerge from the communicative interaction. The research was carried out with seven Dutch council secretaries and their deputies (n=14). The extent to which they displayed the three CLT leadership functions (administrative-, adaptive-, and enabling leadership) in their day-to-day leadership practices was examined.

For this fourteen separate semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with the council secretaries (and their deputies) in seven middle-sized municipalities. The council secretaries were selected on the basis of a number of core values, which increases the reliability of the research (Robson, 2002). These central values are, in addition to (1) the comparable size of the municipalities in respect of number of inhabitants (varying from 34.3K – 63.3K), also the location of the municipalities in (2) the same region. Too great a difference in size could result in possible bias, since it was expected that the size of a municipality would influence the observable complexity, the nature, and size of the problems presented. With regard to the choice of a group of research subjects in the same region, this would increase the chance of a comparable political administrative culture.

The discussions took place in a space chosen by the research subjects. In all cases this was their office. In the discussions the central point was the image they had of their day-to-day leadership activities. On the basis of these discussions 36.5 hours of interviews were transcribed and data reduction carried out by means of open coding based on thematic structuring (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Cassel & Symon, 2004; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Coding was done by using main codes from a previous longitudinal research project into leadership strategies in governmental contexts (Nooteboom & Termeer, 2013). These codes included the characteristics of adaptive and enabling leadership of the CLT. In addition, these codes were extended with characteristics of administrative leadership because the expectation was that particularly in local government this ‘managerial form of leadership’ (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 633) would be found frequently. The coded transcriptions were analyzed and incorporated into tables and diagrams. The transcriptions and the results of the analyses can be consulted on request.

This manner of coding has led to the fact that statements can be made about the leadership practices used by council secretaries in the complex and dynamic internal and external conditions in which they work.

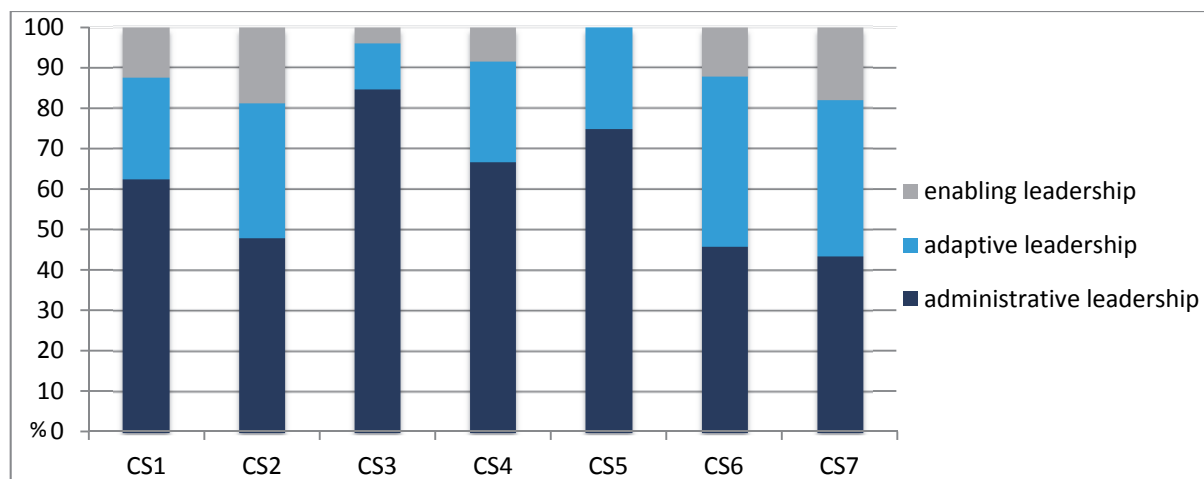
RESULTS: LEADERSHIP STYLES OF DUTCH COUNCIL SECRETARIES

Division of the Three Leadership Functions

The results give a picture of the focus the research subjects put on various leadership activities, spread over various leadership functions (Figure 1). When a leadership function is limited or not observable, this

means that the functionary in question gives little or no attention or time to activities that come under this leadership function.

FIGURE 2
VISIBILITY OF THE CLT LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL SECRETARIES
(CS 1 TO 7) IN THIS RESEARCH, EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES (GROTENS, 2015)



In figure 2 the results from seven council secretaries are displayed. The results from the seven deputies show an almost identical picture. Over the whole range the activities linked to administrative leadership score relatively high: in the research group an average of 61% of all leadership activities fall under administrative leadership, with a lowest score of 44% and a highest score of 85%. With regard to this formal and hierarchical leadership function, a division can be made: in four of the seven cases (CS1, CS3, CS4 and CS5) the activities linked to administrative leadership are dominant (average 72%) in respect of the two other CLT leadership functions, namely ten adaptive leadership and enabling leadership. In the other three cases (CS2, CS6, CS7) the average percentage is 46%. Nevertheless, even in this latter group administrative leadership is the dominant leadership function and ties in with the traditional, hierarchical leadership activities, based on authority and position and with the bureaucratic structures of the council organizations.

Adaptive leadership is overall relatively less visible in the leadership behavior of the research group, on average 29%, while enabling leadership with an average of 10% is even less and in a single case, not observable at all. Three council secretaries (CS2, CS6 and CS7) display relatively more activities of adaptive and enabling leadership than the other council secretaries.

The traditional leadership function (administrative leadership) is dominant, despite the fact that the whole research group noted that the complexity of their work context has greatly increased, although they use differing definitions of complexity.

It can be stated that the interlacing between the three leadership functions (administrative, adaptive and enabling leadership) in the majority of the research group is limited. With CS1, CS3, CS4, and CS5 there is no balance to be seen: administrative leadership remains observably dominant and neither the adaptive nor the enabling leadership functions can correct this dominance. As has been noted earlier this has possible repercussions for the adaptivity of the organizations (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 635).

In brief, a majority of the (deputy) council secretaries in this research who operate in a strongly dynamic and complex situation – and recognize this as such – is primarily internally focused on political –administrative matters and internal activities, and allow the formal administrative leadership to prevail. The external focus on leading in and of the CAS, is less visible or even not at all. For example see CS5 in figure 2 in which, enabling leadership is not apparent. This gives rise to questions, because from the

research it appears that all the research subjects expressed the wish to abandon further the bureaucratic form of leadership. The practice shows a different picture.

Three Factors

The primary question that arises here is: what is the foundation of the dominant attention given to administrative leadership in the various research groups? Here Spicker (2012) is certain when he states that “leadership theories marginalize the relevance of many of the characteristic features of public services” (2012, p. 43).

On the basis of the interviews three factors were identified, which have an influence on the spread of activities over the three leadership functions of administrative, adaptive and enabling leadership, namely, (1) the view of the role, (2) the interpersonal relationship particularly with the mayor, and (3) the context in which they operate (Grotens, 2015).

The council secretaries who in their work focus primarily on supporting the political administration and less on the official organization and society, display less adaptive leadership and enabling leadership (in figure 2: CS1, CS3, CS4 and CS5). Thus one council secretary (CS1) who is strongly focused on the task of supporting the administration stated in one of the interviews: “The problem is not so much that fundamentally I cannot have a discussion, but that I am prevented from having a discussion because I’m busy removing banana skins from the path of politicians and the organization...”(p. 138). This line whereby the council secretary is more focused on the political and administrative processes was also confirmed by another council secretary from another research group: “(...) the council secretary is an insider and [the mayor] an outsider (...).”(p. 157).

Council secretaries who said that they saw the heart of their activities – and those of the organization – as lying in society and operate in the informal networks of society, display more adaptive and enabling leadership (in figure 2: CS2, CS6 and CS7) than their colleagues mentioned above. Thus the council secretary (CS6) with the highest score for adaptive and enabling leadership: “I am constantly networking (...) with external organizations. That has just about become what my work is.” (p. 196).

From the interviews it further emerged that the interpersonal relationship between the council secretary and the mayor influenced the relation between the traditional leadership function (administrative leadership) and the other two CLT leadership functions (adaptive and enabling leadership). If there is tension in this relationship there is little adaptive and/or enabling leadership observable. Thus a council secretary (CS1) from the research group: “I was not so happy in previous municipality: the chief reason was that there was no chemistry with the mayor! (...) Every time there were always dossiers brought up in which there was something wrong. There was always an atmosphere of blame. He also created a lot on insecurity in the organization and that causes tension (...) I asked myself : ‘What am I doing wrong?’ Then you begin to have self-doubts, and that makes you vulnerable!”

The feeling of being held back from reaching one’s potential because the relations with the mayor are not optimal, can also be found with another council secretary (CS4) from the research group: “I had a progress meeting with the mayor, when he said: “I think you must offer more strategic advice!” (...) There we have difference of opinion! I looked at him and saw that it wasn’t well-received! (...) The mayor asked: “Are you going to do it?” I said: “No I stand by what I said at the start of my period.” Now, he totally disagreed with that. There was no point in closing my eyes to it: I must just do it (...).”

In these situations the council secretaries play safe and seem more to cover themselves, limiting themselves to activities that come under the traditional leadership function (administrative leadership).

The third important factor in how activities are spread over the three leadership functions appears to be context. A distinction can be made between external – outside the organization – and internal, within the organization contextual factors (Conger, 2011). Examples of external contextual factors are the culture of the city or region or the management culture. One council secretary gave the following example: “Here the managers think they are somebody, but also that they have to be somebody. That has to do with the management culture, that they also must be able to do it immediately and it is not open to discussion whether they can do something or not.” (Grotens, 2015, p. 217). Examples of internal contextual factors are the organizational culture, the forming of a single municipal organization after

reorganization or serious financial problems. Thus a municipal organization that after a reorganization builds up a stable and structural organizational basis, an illustration of context, as a consequence of which the traditional, hierarchical leadership function (administrative leadership) is dominantly displayed – being in control and focusing on the result – is an important factor (Pawar & Eastman, 1997). This phenomenon is apparent in figure 2, with CS4 and CS5: they work in reorganizing municipalities and adaptive and enabling leadership are displayed by them to a more limited extent.

Three Forces

Due to the complexity of responsibilities, the political decision-making, the influence of external factors, and the ethos of the public sector public leadership is influenced to an exceptional degree (Spicker, 2012; Ospina, 2017). Below three forces are further examined, which among other things in the municipal organization play a role in public managers displaying administrative, adaptive, and enabling leadership – responsibility, politics, and effectiveness.

Responsibility

From the Weberian perspective officials ought to follow the orders given to them by their political masters. Public managers are vertically answerable to the democratically chosen politicians, regardless of whether focus on actions (bureaucracy) or output (‘t Hart, 2014). Adaptive leadership focuses on an effect, outcome, impact and/or added value and demands elbow room. This is dependent on the scope offered by political management (ROB, 2014). This report describes that the successful contact with citizens and government bodies is due chiefly to the principled choices made by the top of the political management themselves. The contribution of the public manager in creating added social value (outcome) is thus partially determined by the local circumstances. If the political management of a municipality or province does not encourage horizontal responsibility and concentrates on vertical answerability mechanisms there is less scope for public managers, in this case council secretaries. A council secretary said about this: “I can still hear the councilor saying ‘I don’t go into the constituency very often, because I am here in city hall far more often due to the significance of my work.’ or ‘I’m not going to hold a public consultancy because I think it is a waste of time’ or ‘I don’t just go somewhere and give a talk, because you do that only when you have been announced and have access.’ Those sorts of things are fairly obvious here and you just have to take them into consideration! They don’t do it out of malevolence, certainly not! But it is just part of the culture.” The result is that the hierarchical and bureaucratic leadership function is more apparent.

Politics: the role of politicians

Many of the public managers who took part in the research mentioned had experienced a change in the political arena (Grotens, 2015). They said that there seemed to be more political incidents, which led to hardening of political relations between, on the one hand, among politicians themselves and on the other between the council and political management. A council secretary stated: “Moreover in the last few years I’ve seen political brutality occur. The player is attacked rather than the ball: that makes it all more difficult. The media also plays a role in this. At present we’re in a strong settlement culture: in this council a hundred thousand things happen perfectly; but no attention is paid to them and the few instances when things do not go so well – and you can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs – there is soon the tendency to put them under the microscope. This often makes it more difficult for the council secretary than in the past too, because there is the tendency to focus on these incidents. Then you forget that the whole concern (...) does its work well.” (p.153).

It is the experience of council secretaries that political managers are less eager to take political responsibility and they talk of a settlement culture (ibid.). The politicians rather take on the role of ‘commission-dispenser’ and staying in control becomes a survival strategy. In addition, there emerges what is called the risk-rule-reflex, namely a disproportionate governmental reaction to risk by establishing new rules, higher standards, more supervision or extra facilities (Van Tol, 2016).

These developments lead to the scope for action by the public manager, here the council secretary, being limited if political managers try to keep control. In municipalities this leads to a paradoxical phenomenon: wanting to be in control, while the municipal tasks and responsibilities grow ever more complex and are played out more and more in networks, for instance the youth services. The increased complexity and networks with horizontal relations demand more flexibility and adaptive capabilities instead of control (Van Dijk, 2016).

Here too, local circumstances have an influence on the role taken on by political managers. How less elbow room they give public managers, the more the administrative leadership function takes precedence and the scope of the public manager to display adaptive leadership and enabling leadership is limited.

Effectiveness

In times of financial short fall the effective use of scarce means receives more attention (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). A consequence of this is renewed attention for the management paradigm New Public Management (Hyndman & Lapsley, 2016); this management paradigm originally emerged in the public sector in the 1980s, whereby excessive bureaucracy was regarded as patronizing, paternalistic, inefficient, slow, and ponderous. The lack of creativity and innovation also meant that confidence in the market increased while trust in government decreased (O'Flynn, 2007; Benington & Moore, 2011). At the moment we see a resurgence of this paradigm with increased attention to efficient focusing on achievements (output), whereby also the focus of the – desired – leadership of the public manager changes to aiming as efficiently as possible at output (Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002). In some places in the public sector there is even a movement towards the traditional management paradigm observable - Traditional Public Administration (Budding, 2014). This paradigm turns the strategic focus chiefly on the internal administrative systems. Public managers – in their bureaucratic surroundings – ensure that the rules are properly applied and the proper procedures are followed. (Chakravarthy & Doz, 1992; O'Flynn, 2007; Bryson et al., 2014). With Traditional Public Administration the focus of leadership of public managers can then be characterized as “command and control” (Kelly et al., 2002).

These developments are opposed to the ideas of Public Value Management, in which the role of public management in essence consists of the creation of increased social value by forming and guiding networks and encouraging dialogue and deliberations with interested parties (Van Wart, 2013; Bryson et al., 2014). In this way adaptive leadership and enabling leadership demand a pro-active and flexible attitude of the public manager. Indeed the proactive attitude and flexibility of the adaptive organization comes under pressure as soon as the focus is on the effective use of scarce means. A traditional leadership style suits this. Moreover, there are public managers who are intrinsically strongly motivated by adaptive leadership and increase the adaptability of the organization beyond the political framework, by operating in informal networks. They regard the political subsystem as an independent phenomenon that functions as it were, alongside the official organization (Grotens, 2015). In this way they create an equal network position in society, as Public Value Management argues. (Moore, 1995; Bryson et al., 2014). In the last instance the hierarchical line of answerability to the democratically elected politicians remains. The question is to what extent is there an equal network position.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Which leadership activities do public managers display in complex situations has been examined but only to a limited extent (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2011). An example is the research by Nooteboom & Termeer (2013), already mentioned, into the manifestation of public leaders in networks and the strategies employed in this.

The data that served as the basis for this article (Grotens, 2015) has a limited reach: it is derived from qualitative research in the Dutch context. Thus the data cannot be regarded as representative of the whole group of public managers or council secretaries. Nevertheless this article attempts to bring clarity to a number of phenomena with which public managers have to deal.

A similar picture emerges from recent research also into Dutch council secretaries. This was qualitative multi-case study, which examined how six Dutch council secretaries ('t Hart, Braham, & Van Dorp, 2016) allotted their time. The research was carried out using agenda analyses, observation and semi-structured interviews. In this research a distinction was made between the time public managers spent political-management activities, internal activities (organization) and external activities. The results show that what can be called the vertical management line (political-management and internal activities) was dominant for five of the six council secretaries. Only one of the council secretaries' coded agenda items showed 30% of time given to external activities in one year ('t Hart et al., 2016, p. 27). The other council secretaries' time given to external activities was between 12% and 19%.

Comparable qualitative research (n=195) into leadership in six American hospitals (Uhl-Bien, 2012) comes to a similar conclusion: in four of the six hospitals the traditional leadership function was dominant.

In addition to the view of the role, the interpersonal relations with political managers (primarily the mayor) and the context, there are a number of forces that influence how they fulfill the CLT leadership functions adaptive leadership and enabling leadership, namely the degree to which (1) in reality the political-management top is open to rethink and change contact with society, (2) politicians put the role of 'commission dispenser' in the first place and aim at being in control, and (3) are driven by efficiency and output, possibly due to a financial short fall. These three forces appear to strengthen traditional leadership patterns. The public managers primarily focus on top-down use the means of control in order to create more certainty in the achievement of the strategic vision decided (Uhl-Bien, 2012). In leadership terms, they fall back on 'command and control', which belongs in the manner of thinking of Traditional Public Administration. With that the adaptivity of the organization and also the creation of increased public value are reduced (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009; Bryson et al., 2014). The dominance of the traditional leadership function (administrative leadership) in respect of the other two CLT leadership functions (adaptive leadership and enabling leadership) means that complex problems are tackled from the hierarchical and bureaucratic position of the leader; the starting point of action is then placed primarily on authority rather than influence (Benington & Hartley, 2010).

The lack of adaptive and enabling leadership within local government also implies that there is no interlacing between the traditional and the other CLT leadership functions. The consequence of this is a reduced adaptive capability while the complex conditions within which government organizations operate, demand strong adaptive leadership.

Given the complex and dynamic problems with which government is confronted, it is increasingly clear that government institutions can (no longer) solve such problems, all the more because they are part of a network of actors with differing interests (Bryson et al., 2014; Van Dijk, 2016). Following the ideas of Public Value Management the public manager is expected to have a coaching, but enterprising and innovative perspective, with which he supports colleagues in the optimal functioning in the various internal and external networks (Hartley, 2005; Benington, 2011). Indeed, due to the strong orientation on the paradigms of Traditional Public Administration and /or New Public Management the creation of increased public value comes under pressure.

Public managers do well to ask themselves frequently whether their leadership practices administrative, adaptive or enabling leadership suit the existing task of their organization. The conditions under which public managers operate are subject to constant change. The question of what this means for the functioning of public managers, such as council secretaries, demands realistic and critical self-reflection (Barge, 2007; Owens & Hekman, 2012; Ou et al., 2014). This means not only a dialogue with one's self, but with others too (Van Loon & Van Dijk, 2015). Research has shown that for now discussions take a primarily substantive turn (Grotens, 2015). Admitting each other to an interpersonal level demands trust and reciprocity. Having a discussion at the meta-level and expressing each other's expectations seems to be a less obvious option. It is important to look for the right balance, including on the interpersonal level. Therefore self-reflection is essential, if only to prevent public leadership in complex situations being just a theoretical exercise.

According to the theory increased public value is created by means of dialogue and collaboration. In this public managers play a crucial part. Adaptive leadership and in its wake, enabling leadership are essential for the creation of increased public value.

In practice a traditional leadership style is observably dominant, by which the adaptive capabilities of government institutions are limited. In complex conditions that are bound together the leadership aims 'perform and adapt' are insufficiently intertwined - seem out of balance.

According to the theory, a public manager should exercise an adaptive leadership style. In practice this is rarely the case with council secretaries: there is a 'gap' between theory and practice.

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